



Baked Alaska

Resources for school RE for students aged 13-18 about climate change inspired by the Riding Lights Theatre Company show which asks...

Can we save the planet?

This is one of seven files of teaching and learning ideas, useful in RE and RME, where issues about ethics, theology and climate change are explored with young people.

Each file of lesson ideas is accompanied by a PowerPoint sequence for teachers to use as they introduce the complex ethics of climate to their students.

The work draws upon ideas from Christianity and other religions and worldviews but the key focus is on human and humane values. Each of the seven units relates to a film clip from the stage show.

Unit 2: Risky Business

Greed could kill us all!

In this unit, the film explores how fossil fuel companies must face the dilemma of profit versus climate safety. Is there such a thing as corporate greed? What effects does this have? Jesus' Parable of the Rich Fool is applied to life at the top of an oil company, asking whether the pursuit of profit without morality is stupid.

British Values

Schools promote the values of tolerance, respect, individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law. This work contributes to exploring this area by examining a clash of values. We are raising challenging questions about the limits of individual liberty: should billionaires be free to make even more money when their actions show no respect for the Earth and all our futures?

Curriculum connections

The learning objectives in this work connect to GCSE, Scottish RME and RE outcomes for 14-year-olds, including enabling learners to:

- Explain connections between religion and belief and environmental ethics;
- Give reasons for their views about climate change and its impacts on humanity;
- Consider arguments for climate justice;
- Develop their analysis of the challenges faced by this generation on Earth about the future of the planet.

GCSE RS requires the study of:

- The value of the world and the duty of human beings to protect it, including religious teaching about stewardship, dominion, responsibility, awe and wonder.
- The use and abuse of the environment, including the use of natural resources and pollution.
- The concepts of sanctity of life and the quality of life.

In Scotland, this work connects to the intention that the RME Curriculum enables students to:

- Apply developing understanding of morality to consider a range of moral dilemmas in order to find ways which could promote a more just and compassionate society.

[RME 4-02b]

Summary of the film

Risky Business (approximate length 10:20)

The film explores the idea of corporate greed, using a Parable of Jesus about a rich man who cared only for his own ease, and nothing for his neighbours, workers or fellow humans. Ignoring death, in the end his greed consumes him. But you can't take it with you.

Through a narrative that applies the parable to a fictional oil CEO and company, the drama shows how corporate greed is a mighty obstacle to serious and effective responses to climate change which are characterised by justice. We could all be overwhelmed by the greedy few.

But the terminal folly of placing greed above love, or solidarity, or co-operation, or even survival is also exposed.

In a sinking ship, holding onto your gold is senseless as well as greedy. The Earth is a ship, just one ship, slowly sinking.

Learning Activity 1: The Fossil Fuel Fool

Watch clip 2 with the class.

Read from the Christian Bible the Parable of the Rich Fool, on which the first half of the clip is based, from Luke 12:16-21:

Jesus said: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I’ll say to myself, “You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

“This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

Discuss these questions:

- What did the drama writer get from the Bible?
- What has the dramatisation added to the Bible?
- Jesus had never heard of climate change and climate justice. But is his parable relevant to our current crisis? How?
- What does it mean to be ‘rich towards God’? Is it similar to being generous?

Learning Activity 2: Quick on the draw

- Following the discussion, play the soundtrack of the first half of the clip to your class again (blank the visuals), and ask them as they hear it to sketch simultaneously the character of the Fossil Fuel Fool.
- They might pick these details: he can turn a blind eye, stuff his ears with money, scour green pastures, pump and frack. He can – and does – talk to his own soul about stillness. He imagines his own future on a mountaintop palace as the waters of global warming rise. Take just 3 minutes for this, and put the cartoons up around the class for a quick look and to choose some favourites. Who did what well?
- Ask students to give out three ticks to the ones they like best, as a way of judging. Discuss.

Learning Activity 3: Dilemmas and Decisions

- This activity uses 5 multi-path narratives which set a dilemma related to ecological issues for students to respond to. The narratives are a good way of making the political, global and complex personal both simple and stark. Point out to students that our global future is a kind of real-life, scary, high-stakes ‘multipath narrative’!
- If you wish, play it like a game. Take 5 volunteers to come to the front of class. Read (or get other students to read) the dilemma to one student. Pause before they give their views, and all other students must guess whether they will say ‘yes’ or ‘no’. To prevent fraud (!) have them write their guess down next to a number.
- Ask the students answering the dilemmas to explain their choices and ideas.
- Use the two questions at the end of each dilemma – one ethical, one religious – to develop learning and thinking. Ask your students to keep notes for a writing task if you wish.
- When the 5 dilemmas and discussions are complete, ask students in pairs to note what they have been thinking about and what they have learned.

Learning Activity 4: Write your own dilemma

- Use the writing frame on the sixth dilemma page below to get students, in pairs, to write some more multi-path ethical dilemmas about ecology and climate justice.
- A class of thirty will produce 15 new dilemmas. Arrange them into groups of about 6 and get them to play ‘dilemmas and decisions’ with the best examples of these new dilemmas.

Dilemmas and Decisions: How green are you?

Situation A: Litter and responsibility

You are walking through a local park that is particularly well kept and beautiful: you love it, and often walk there. You see a young teenager screwing up their fish and chip paper and chucking it onto the grass. There is a litter bin not 10 metres away. The teenager is not large, or rough looking, so you don't feel scared – there are other people around, and it is broad daylight.

Do you speak to the young person and ask them to put their rubbish in the bin?

YES	NO
<p>The youth looks you up and down, and laughs. S/he tells you to get stuffed. 'You care about litter? Pick it up yourself if it makes you so irritated.'</p> <p>Do you pick up the chip papers and take them to the bin, in front of the young person?</p> <p>Yes: See below No: Situation ends</p>	<p>You decide not to say anything, but then the teenager goes over to the bin, and starts rummaging through it, as if looking for something. As they do this, they are throwing big handfuls of other rubbish out of the bin on to the surrounding grass and flower beds.</p> <p>Do you now speak to the youth about the littering, asking them to tidy up?</p> <p>Yes: Situation ends No: See below</p>
YES	NO
<p>You put the chip paper in the bin. The young person is angry and laughing at you. S/he grabs the wrappers back out of the bin and throws them to the ground again. You can see that this might develop into a tussle. Do you take the rubbish with you and walk away, to put it in another bin once the youth is out of sight?</p>	<p>You then see what the youth was after: a glass bottle, which s/he wants to use as a football. The bottle is being kicked around on the path, where it looks likely to smash. The path leads to the small children's play area. Do you now speak up about the danger, even though you chose not to speak up about the littering?</p>
<p>Questions for discussion: responsibility for our environment</p> <p>Litter in local parks can be annoying and spoil the view. But global 'littering' is clogging up the planet with human waste. Dead whales are found with tonnes of plastic in their stomachs. What can individuals, communities, companies and governments do about the way humans waste stuff, and pollute the Earth?</p> <p>In Christian belief, God has made humanity stewards of the Earth, carers for the planet. If this belief is put into action by the world's Christians, what difference would it make? Create a list of possible impacts.</p>	

Dilemmas and Decisions

Situation D: Climate change – leaks and falsehoods

You are a young journalist on a national newspaper, and you have been working on a story about climate change. The situation is that a government department in your country is suspected of falsifying the figures it publishes about carbon emissions, so that they can claim to be meeting agreed targets for energy efficiency. You have some good evidence from a ‘leaky source’ inside the government department that the minister may have been less than 100% truthful in a statement. It is a big story. You neither support nor oppose the party in government particularly strongly. You go to your editor with the story, but the editor says, ‘Ah, no, we won’t be publishing that. Ask no questions Junior.’ The atmosphere suddenly feels rather heavy.

Do you knuckle under and do as your editor says, without asking any questions?

YES	NO
<p>You put your efforts into other stories and let the climate change story go to the bottom of the pile. But a couple of weeks later, your leaky source sends you secretly a copy of a memo from inside the government department which proves that the government has been secretly falsifying its carbon emissions and claiming wrongly to be meeting its targets for over two years. You think it would be a huge story. But when you take the memo and show your editor, he says, ‘Give that to me please.’ And takes it from you. You watch him put it through the shredder (he does not know you have kept a copy!). ‘Don’t risk your future’ he advises. But you consider your options, and realise you could go to another news source to share your inside information. Do you, taking precautions to be secretive, give the damning memo to one of your newspaper’s rivals?</p> <p>Yes: See below. No: Situation ends</p>	<p>You decide that you must ‘get the story out’. You carefully and secretly approach a journalist on a rival paper, and meet to talk about the story. You agree to meet again, and bring your evidence, in a few days.</p> <p>After that, you notice a few odd things. Clicks on your phone, and signs your mail has been opened, a sense that you are being followed from the office when you go out to meet sources. It is scary. You become convinced that powerful people are taking an interest in the climate change leaks, and you are alarmed, even fearing for your safety, let alone your career.</p> <p>Do you miss the meeting with the journalist from your rival paper and keep your material to yourself?</p> <p>Yes: Situation ends No: See below</p>
YES	NO
<p>The memo is published by your rival, and the story is huge. A government minister has to resign and the Prime Minister is in trouble about the case. Then your editor calls you in for a ‘difficult conversation’. You fear you will be sacked, but he just tells you that even if you were the source of the leaked story, then he will keep you on the staff, on condition that you never investigate these issues again. You smell a rat. Several rats! You think your paper is corrupt.</p> <p>Despite your good salary and prospects, do you resign?</p>	<p>After the second meeting, your ‘big story’ about government lying to avoid its carbon emission targets comes out everywhere, and is huge. A government minister resigns and the Prime Minister is under pressure. But for you, things get hot. Two special police officers visit you, and warn you that you will be arrested unless you reveal the person at the government department who leaked documents to you (they have broken the Official Secrets Act).</p> <p>As a good journalist, do you refuse to help them, and accept getting arrested?</p>
<p>Questions for discussion: vested interests – can they be challenged?</p> <p>Tobacco firms denied that smoking causes cancer for decades, paying scientists to do studies that would support them. This is a dilemma about the secrecy and threats of vested interests defending themselves. Do you believe that big companies and governments will go to any lengths to deny climate change if it loses them money? Who could control the major companies and big governments if this were happening?</p> <p>Christianity teaches that mighty rulers and the proud and greedy rich will be judged by God. What do you think might be God’s message to our planet and our rulers about climate change? Write it like a prophecy!</p>	

